

ROADSIDE MARKET LAYOUT

ED WATKINS
EXTENSION ECONOMIST
FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Many Ohio fruit and vegetable growers are located within commuting distance of large numbers of consumers. A sizable proportion of these customers like to visit and buy where there is an image of farm freshness. This situation offers possibilities for those growers who are interested in roadside marketing.

The concept of a marketing mix may be used in planning a roadside market. The ingredients of an effective marketing mix can be identified as:

- 1) The market-structure, appearance, convenience, layout
- 2) Price-price-quality relationships
- 3) Products offered - variety, quality, packaging
- 4) Advertising and promotion-media, message, timing, and audience
- 5) Service-including employee attitude, customer service and market image.

Although this discussion will concentrate on the market itself and specifically on elements of roadside market layout, there is interaction between all of the ingredients of the above marketing mix. One ingredient cannot be considered in isolation from the other. While consideration is being given to market layout, we should be consistently be concerned with price, with product selection, and variety and quality; with employee attitudes; and with advertising and promotion.

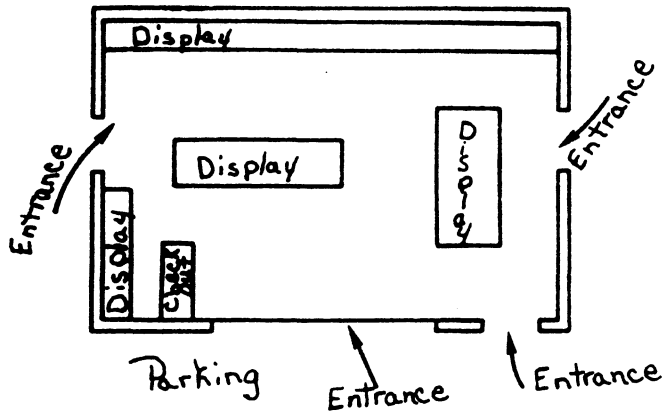
Some priority must be given to the notion that all of these ingredients give the same message to the customer. If for example, a particular market is emphasizing a quality image then the market itself, the pricing program, products offered, advertising and employees, ideally would be giving the same message to the customer. Keeping main points in mind, let's look at some basic consideration about market layout.

Altering market layout can change utter confusion on busy weekends to a more effective sales and profit picture. Our emphasis will not be on presenting an ideal layout, but rather on developing a few ideas which you may be able to put to work in your market.

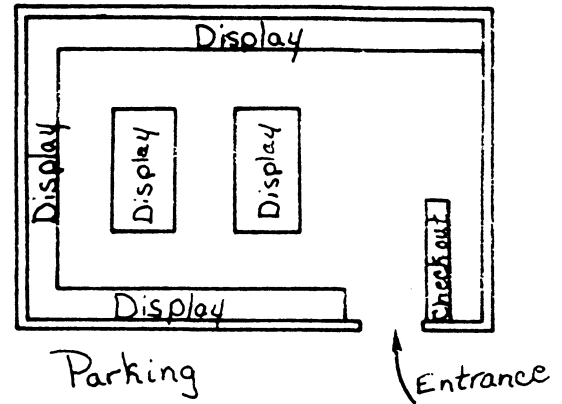
Generally speaking, we have three major areas of concern when considering changes which may improve operations. One relates to the customer. Here we are concerned with ease of shopping, effective display, and providing customers with a pleasant experience they will wish to repeat. The second relates to ourselves and our employees. At issue here is how to get the work done most efficiently and at the same time not interfere with the pleasant shopping experience of the customer. The third area concerns security. Can we organize so we are reasonably sure that all merchandise moving out of the market is checked and paid for.

Having said this much about the broad areas of concern, let's move to more specific ideas that you can consider when developing your own unique market and making it a still better place to shop.

SKETCH A
Too Many Entrances

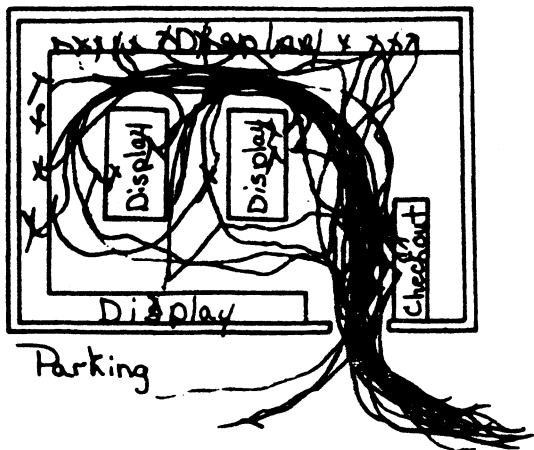


SKETCH B
One Entrance



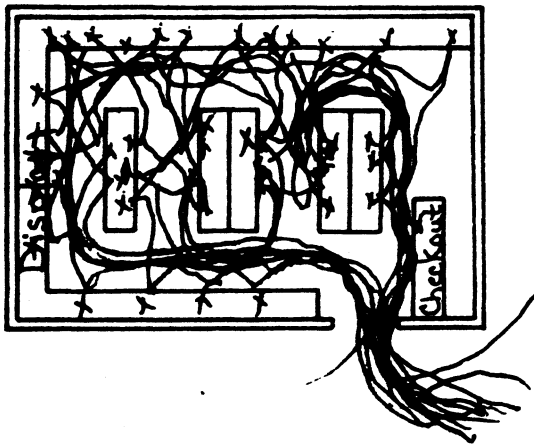
- 1) Restrict the size and number of entrances and exits of the market. You may not be able to fully utilize this one if you put a high priority on an open front market for display purposes. Ideally, we would consider only one entrance-exit located at one side of the front of the market. Note the difference in display areas available between sketch A & B.
- 2) Encourage a definite customer traffic pattern within the market. We can observe how effectively your market is shopped by developing customer traffic flow charts. Draw a sketch of your market and mark on the sketch the route individual customers take and where purchases are made. Several routes superimposed on one sketch will identify "hot spots" and "cold spots" in the market. See sketch C & D.
- 3) Identify "power" items and locate these to get desirable traffic patterns. Your most popular products should be located in the shopping pattern so customers will shop the entire market. See sketch C & D.
- 4) Provide space to display all items for sale. Today's customers are conditioned to self service. Step back and allow the product price and package to sell themselves. If space is limited, convert horizontal display fixtures to vertical displays.
- 5) Plan aisle widths to handle near maximum crowds. Access routes and aisle widths which are satisfactory during the week, restrict customer movement, block the effect of displays and curtail sales during busy weekends.

SKETCH C



With only 15 customer routes plotted on this sketch, it is apparent that there are cold spots in this market and confusion in the traffic pattern. When we distribute the demand or power items throughout the market and shift the display fixtures we can secure a better traffic flow. X's mark location of purchases.

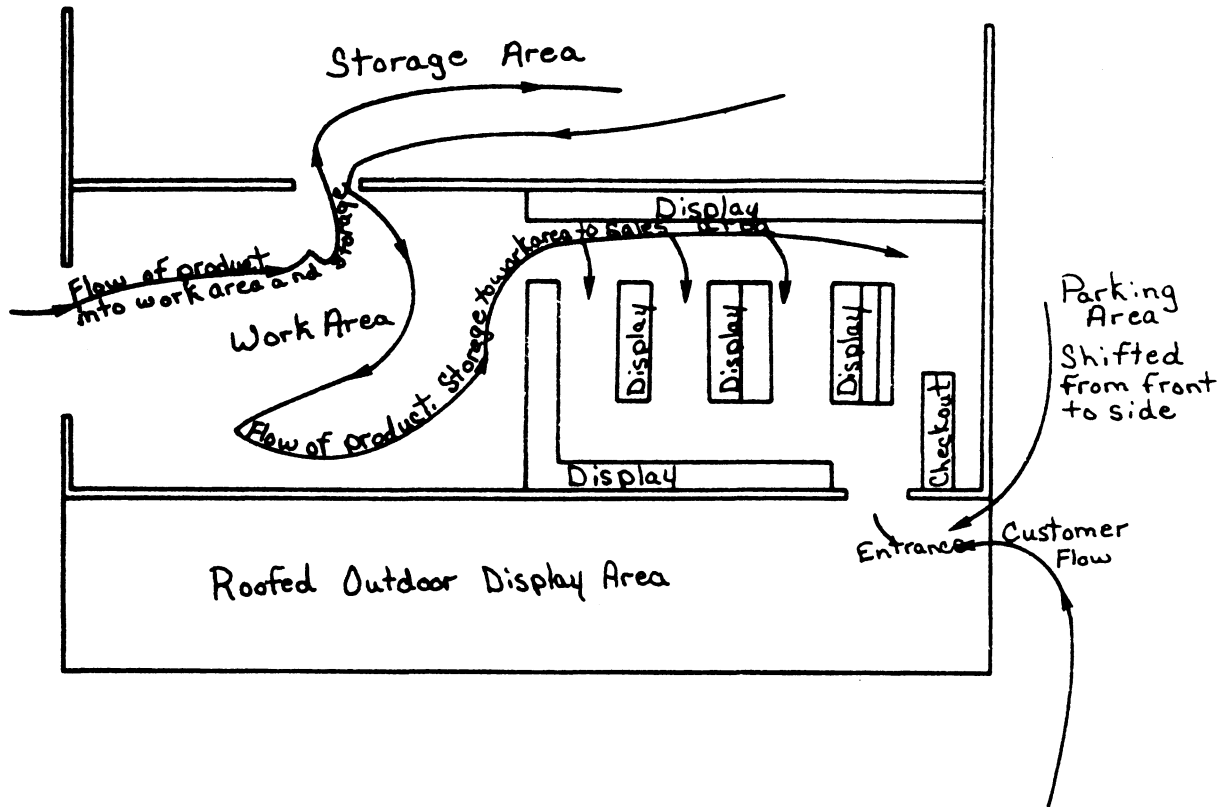
SKETCH D



When we move some of the high demand items from the back wall to the display on the wall to the left we help customers shop the entire market. By restricting the area near the checkout, we can encourage customers to bear left after entering.

- 6) Provide more aisle space where customers take more time to make selections. Locations where you sell bulk fruit or sweet corn, for example, selected by customers, will require wider aisles. Minimum aisle widths should allow people to pass -- minimum of 3 feet, or 4 feet in case carts or wagons are used. Maximum aisle width in areas where customers congregate is 11 feet.
- 7) The checkout area ideally is located last in the shopping pattern. The checkout area is where orders are brought together and the money changes hands. Restrict this area to provide a movement past the checkout point rather than a place to congregate.
- 8) Coordinate display-sales area, work area and storage areas. Arrange so that flow of employees and products in maintaining displays interferes little with customer flows. Arrange employee traffic patterns so that there is little back tracking and rehandling of merchandise. Product should flow easily from storage to work area to sales area. Transport product "on wheels". Doorways should be wide (4-5') enough to handle "on wheels". Floors should be at the same level to facilitate movement. See sketch E.

SKETCH E



- 9) In areas where sorting and packaging is done, provide work station with all the tools and packaging materials readily available. A portable work station may be a solution where you wish to work in the sales area during the week and in a packing room during the periods when many customers are shopping.
- 10) Locate parking area and access to the market so car traffic and customer traffic do not interfere with the operation of the market. One solution locates parking at one side of the market rather than in front and funnels the customers through any outdoor display area. See sketch E.

There likely is no such "critter" as the ideal layout, and certainly there are additional considerations to which attention can be given. Most of the considerations discussed have some degree of application to most roadside markets. Consideration of the above 10 points may generate some ideas useful in planning or operating your market.